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ABSTRACT

A number of studies cited in the literature show a positive correlation between the students scholastic grade point average and his library usage. The case is made by a growing cult of librarians who are engaged in "teaching the library" that the librarian so engaged makes a direct contribution to the student's success at his studies. Although there is general agreement that students need help in the use of the library, real disagreement does exist as to (1) exactly who needs that help, (2) under what conditions, (3) when, and (4) to what degree. This proposal confronts that disagreement, suggesting that library instruction should be given to the student at the time of need, to all classes (status) of students, continuously (but not repetitiously) and at a cost so cheap that the recipient cannot afford to pass it up. Six guiding principles, expanding on the aforementioned suggestions, are offered along with a four-level sample program of instruction. Program evaluation, resource base, faculty involvement and other problems inherent in the program are discussed. (Author/KE)

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LIBRARY INSTRUCTION PROGRAM PROPOSAL

by Mary B. Cassata

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LIBRARY INSTRUCTION PROGRAM PROPOSAL

A number of studies are cited in the literature showing a positive correlation between the student's scholastic grade point average and his library usage. The relationship is based on a substantial body of research findings that suggest that the higher the student's grade point, the more likely and more frequently is he to use the library. The case is then made by a growing cult of librarians who are engaged in "teaching the library" through structured (as well as unstructured) library instruction programs that the librarian so engaged makes a direct contribution to the student's success at his studies. It is further posited that the library instruction program satisfies a fundamental principle of librarianship: a concern for and a knowledge of the user and his needs.

Library Instruction for Whom, When, What and How?

Although there is general agreement that students need help in the use of the library, real disagreement does exist as to (1) exactly who needs that help, (2) under what conditions, (3) when, and (4) to what degree. As though to respond to this Lasswellian type question, research findings from the Monteith College Library experiment show that seniors, women, and lower economic status students used the library more than freshmen, men, and higher economic status students, with the level of library use being course related. My own feeling is that any library should be able to assess the needs, attitudes, and interests of its users through such simple devices as surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. Further, given the fact that the faculty are the prime motivators of library usage through their courses of study, the library must aggressively pursue its goal of establishing effective collaboration with the faculty in teaching library skills to students. In fact, you as Director of Libraries have already begun an intensive program of meeting

and talking with the faculty to promote the Libraries' services, its human resources, and its collections. It is now up to the librarians to establish services and programs of the highest calibre in order to achieve a following among the faculty and students, resulting in a demand for these services and programs.

The answer to under what conditions, when, and to what degree library instruction should be given to the student seems to be abundantly clear: instruction should be given to the student at the time of need, to all classes (status) of students, and continuously (but not repetitiously). I would not minimize the strength of an argument frequently made: that at least 50% of all entering freshmen never see graduation day at the institution in which they enroll, but I would not allow such an argument to shake my belief that freshmen --- and subfreshmen --- need and should have library instruction as much as any other class of student. But I would submit that the instruction could and perhaps should differ in type and perhaps in intensity.

What Kinds of Library Instruction Programs

Library instruction programs come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and casings. Being a firm believer in giving the patron what he wants when he wants it, and additionally, in his own terms, I also believe, however, that we must package our own services as attractively as it is possible to do so and to make the cost so cheap to the user (just his time) that he cannot afford to pass up accepting the keys we are offering that would open the door to his extant independent (and future) scholarly pursuits. I would suggest that we consider the following as guiding principles for our instruction programs:

(1) Library instruction should be course related.

(2) The library should serve as a teaching laboratory in which librarians would guide the student by demonstration and example through the necessary steps of locating the required information before the student is allowed to pursue his project independently.

(3) Each library instructional course should be carefully planned as part of a sequence of courses that build upon each other and form a material progression going from the simple to the more complex.

(4) Each library course, and hence the overall instructional program should have a built in evaluation mechanism to assess the progress being made towards the program's stated goals and to allow for course improvement and modification.

(5) The instructional program should be flexible, adaptable, and malleable, to be changed, improved, and developed as circumstances and conditions warrant and permit.

(6) The library instruction program should be able to accommodate itself to offering courses for credit; non-credit; classroom instruction; library centered instruction; self (paced) instruction; and in whatever mix, mode, or medium appears to offer the best fit.

One such typical library instruction program may be as follows:

Level 1: Remedial Oreientation Course

This would be a very brief course offered to incoming freshmen, transfer, and foreign students who showed on the basis of a library knowledge test that they required more instruction in finding their way around the library. An on the spot, learn by doing sequence would be created in the library to start them on the road to knowing the library.

Level 2: Freshmen (Supervised) Library/Laboratory Course

This course would probably be library-based. The library would become the laboratory --- a teaching library which would provide more and more aggressive reference service then is generally offered in a university library; and in fact during term paper time, extended reference guidance might be provided with several more reference librarians on duty. Two or three persons might also staff the catalog information desks which would be located near the card catalog. In fact some libraries have confronted this problem by manning the catalog information desks with catalogers; and have employed graduate assistants or library school students to teach the use of such elementary resources as the Readers'Guide

and the Social Science and the Humanities Index. In all cases, the by-word for the staff is informality, approachability, being a helpmate. "Library Rap" sessions with freshmen have proved a successful way of breaking the ice.

Note:

Some libraries, such as the University of Washington, Berkeley, UCLA have developed rather sophisticated library instruction courses for the undergraduate using the learn-by-doing approach. The students are taught the library's tools and use a search strategy to compile annotated bibliographies. The course is generally taught in several sections and is given for credit. Library instruction texts of the nature used by Berkeley and UCLA and the University of Washington are readily available and can be adapted for the SUNYAB Libraries. I would imagine that our strategy might be to proceed in the Undergraduate Library on the present campus, because of staff, collection, and space limitations, at a less formalized pace (as outlined earlier on this section) but certainly a great deal of thought should be given to the planning of a Berkeley-type program for the Amherst campus Undergraduate Library. In any event, whether on this campus or on the Amherst campus our goal would be to give our freshmen students the opportunity to understand basic library resources and the opportunity to learn how to use them effectively.

Level 3: Bibliography Course for Upper Level Undergraduates (with Beginning Majors) and Beginning Graduate Students

While basic information should be dealt with at the lower division level as a cornerstone for later instruction, specialized instruction should be reserved for upper division or graduate study. When the student is at the stage of selecting a major in a discipline he is generally ready to dig into the bibliography of his chosen field. It is at this level that the librarian must be especially willing to take the initiative to sell the faculty on the idea that what he has to offer will do much to help towards producing

truly scholarly work. At this point, there is no question that the library research methodology courses should be formalized, offered for credit, and should cover as wide a spectrum of disciplines and reach as large a number of students as possible.

Level 4: Library Research Methodology for Doctoral Students

I would propose that this course be required of all doctoral students, taken prior to the writing of their dissertation proposal. The objective of this course would be for the student to organize and execute a successful search of the literature in the subject field of his doctoral studies. During the course of this course, the student hopefully would be able to select a useful, reasonably unique topic, which would have sufficient basic information available to make the dissertation feasible to undertake. The librarian instructor would import to the student an understanding of the "bibliographic chain" of information, guide him through a search strategy, acquaint him with the important library resources in his field, and in the specialized indexing and abstracting services with which he should acquaint himself. The library instructor should be asked to sit on the dissertation committee, being called upon for his expertise to comment on the bibliography.

Not included in the above levels would be intervening levels of library instruction offered in conjunction with senior seminar courses, one-shot courses, library instruction courses designed for faculty, workshops, mini courses, and so forth. As stated previously, the program should be flexible enough to allow for programmed instruction, and independent study. As part of this flexibility the Continuing Edication program of SUNY Buffalo might be viewed as an experimental forum for course tryouts. and "off Broadway" runs.

Not to ignore the more familiar types of library orientation, there should be a place for the guided orientation tour, slide/tape programs, audio tapes, multi media presentations, and Library Pathfinders. While library instruction should be offered to those who wish it, equally important, information, too, should be offered to those who wish it.

Evaluating the Library Instruction Program

Various scientific techniques may be applied to measure the effectiveness of the library instruction program and various statistical tests and analyses employed to determine its impact. One of the most practical and simplest ways to assess this impact, however, rests with the well structured questionnaire which is administered to the recipients of our services. Since the goal of the library instruction program would be to assist the student in "learning the library", the questionnaire should be designed to measure whether learning has taken place. There is no need for librarians to re-invent the wheel: a substantial number of evaluative questionnaires that would serve our purpose do exist; it is only essential that we either use an existing model or develop our own instruments to determine how well we are meeting our goals.

The Library's Resources for Its Instructional Programs

The library faculty is,of course, the Libraries' single most important resource for its instructional program. It is essential that this resource be properly utilized and assigned to achieve maximum penetration into the University's academic programs. In addition to the reference/bibliographers and special resource librarians who would carry the ball in the instructional program, a corps of effective second linesmen --- other professionals and support staff --- must be ready to assist in and complement these efforts. It is essential that a coordinator (probably the new Head of Lockwood's Reference Department) --- or perhaps several coordinators --- be given the responsibility for seeing to it that the faculty's course needs are covered by the appropriate library instructional component. In addition, there are the other than human resources to be considered. Collectively, the Libraries' reference collections are strong, but in addition we would require library instruction manuals (these are available, for example, from Brigham Young University, Earlham College, etc., and could be modified for the SUNYAB programs), reference guides in the bibliography of a subject field (our in-house guides as have been prepared by the Reference Department), slide/tape presentations, library pathfinders, all contributing towards achieving a maximum effect.

Problems

The biggest sin of all would be to pretend that the program envisioned would be simple or could be accomplished overnight. The development of a truly excellent program will take years to accomplish and the efforts of many

people. The problems of qualified staff, adequate in number; the working out of the logistical and mechanical details, both within the Libraries and within the University would provide us with sufficient challenges to occupy a substantial portion of our energies. There are problems of cost --- and the entire configuration of the time element in terms both of tradeoffs in other service programs and release time for lesson preparation, instruction, and counseling, would have to be grappled with, but it is not the purpose of this paper to cover that here. There are questions of priority --- which course to offer when? where? --- the number of course sections to hold, the bureaucratic maze that would have to be tested for including the course among the faculty's offerings, the listing in the university catalog, and so forth.

Establishing Faculty/Librarian Relationships

As already stated in this paper, the ideal relationship between faculty and librarian would be for them to engage in scholarly collaboration as equals. Again, this is not simple to achieve. There are all kinds of preconceptions and misconceptions to overcome. What is the role of the faculty? What is the role of the librarian? When do the two converge? When do they separate? And what is each's exclusive domain? I am not suggesting that the answers to these questions are difficult; but I am suggesting that the questions will raise defenses on the part of many. Nevertheless, we cannot afford to wait for a better time --- there is no better time than now but we must proceed with the caution of having well developed strategies, excellent public relations programs, and impeccable, well planned and well executed library instruction courses especially during our early tryouts. We must remember that a turned off faculty will not result in a turned on library instruction program. Additionally, we must set our sights on other gains and other arenas: appointments for a larger number of the library faculty to significant faculty committees, to include curriculum committees, theses and doctoral dissertation committees, and the like.

And in Conclusion . . .

Finally, the unstated should be stated: in the vigorous pursuit of these new directions, the library faculty will be involved visibly in the academic mainstream of the university in ways that will afford them the opportunity to make a substantial intellectual contribution to the academic and research programs of the University. It will be at this time hopefully that status problems will take care of themselves.

As Louis Vagianos stated it in his lead article in the most recent issue of Library Journal ("What Rough Beast A-Borning?" LJ, June 15, 1973, p. 1875) "The basic purpose of librarianship [is] ensuring the final connection between the great stores of available messages and the unknown minds, to whom they are not addressed but for whom they are intended."